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UNCLE RICHARD'S

STORIES.

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UNCLE RICHARD'S FIRST STORY

CHAPTER I.

"I HAVE been looking everywhere for you, Uncle Richard! what are you doing out here alone?" asks little Beatrice, as she finds herself suddenly facing the old walnut-tree in the far meadow, and sees her well-beloved uncle, with his hat well over his eyes, stretched out at his ease among the tall grass and sweet-scented clover. "The house is so dull when you are away!"

"Is it, little girl?" he laughs, as she

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sits down beside him, and coolly proceeds to take off his hat, and to carefully place a kiss on his nose. "Well, you see, it is all so pleasant here — especially for any one like me, who spends all his days in close streets and smoky towns — the country is such a treat."

"Yes, but why do you live there, Uncle Richard? You might as well always stay here."

"I might, dearie; but, you see, there's duty."

"Duty! I hate duty! It always means something disagreeable!" and spoiled Beatrice catches up a handful of grass and scatters it angrily about her.

"Not always. Indeed, you would find it a most uncomfortable world if every one only did what was agreeable to

themselves. I don't like going about among some of the grinders and workers of our town, listening to their ugly words and complaints, and sometimes seeing sad sights in their homes, half as well as I do lying here, with God's pure air and beautiful birds and flowers about me. But then I hope I am doing His work when I can leave a good thought, or do some little service to these poor ignorant children of His — then the heavy duty becomes very light and pleasant, love. The yoke of Christ is not a heavy one to bear to those who take it up willingly, as I learn of it here," and he looks reverently at the book in his hand, and then at the blue sky so calm and still.

"What part are you reading, uncle?"

asks Beatrice, eagerly. "I like best about little baby Moses, or poor Joseph, who was sold, and became rich. Hagar and Ishmael is such a sad story, though Ishmael did become a great man. But there are plenty of children in the Bible that became famous prophets and kings, and were written and talked about. How nice it would be if one could become famous now!" Then, seeing the look in her uncle's eyes, Beatrice added, "I mean, become good — very, very good and famous."

"Good and famous are such very different things, Beatie; a man may be famous and very bad. Some men —"

"Oh, I don't mean men. I mean children — boys, or girls like me. There seems nothing at all that we can do."

"Girls like you can do a very great deal; they can be gentle, and helpful, and patient — unselfish, in short — thinking of others before themselves, and so make others happy. That's doing something, isn't it?"

"Oh, that's nothing! any one can do that!" she sighs, still scattering the daisies.

"Can they? I heard of a girl disturbing the whole house all one morning, because she could not have a new doll's hat. Yes, she did, really, Beatrice. Then she sulked for an hour — can you believe it? — because she was asked to mend her own gloves. The rest of the day was filled up with complaints, because of a small cut on her thumb done by herself with a penknife borrowed unasked, and —"

"Oh, please don't!" cried poor Beatie, with a crimsoned face.

"Very well! I only wanted to show you how much there is for children to do, and very difficult work, too; so cheer up, while I tell you the story of a little girl I met with in the course of my travels — only a poor little simple country child, but one who taught me how great was the power of unselfish love and patience."

Beatie, with a mental resolve to be good, recovers her composure at the promise of a story out here among the flowers and butterflies, and listens attentively as Uncle Richard begins.

"Once upon a time — as all stories ought to begin, only mine did not begin so very long ago — I lived as curate in

a pretty village in Yorkshire. An out-of-the-way spot it was, but very pretty, and a great place for nutting and blackberries.

"During my rambles I often met with big Ben Bryant, a kind of under-keeper, who lived in a queer kind of nest, built of logs and stones, some distance from the village, and at the entrance of a wood. It was a wild out-of-the-way sort of place, pretty enough in summer, when it was hidden in ivy and honeysuckle, but dreary in the winter, when the snow lying on it made it look like some monster white mushroom — an unlucky place the villagers said, for summer after summer the fever had stolen in like a cruel thief, and carried off seven pretty children, and at last their patient weakly

mother, leaving poor big Ben almost broken-hearted, with only Nellie Mary to comfort him; and a pretty, bright, healthy looking gipsy she was when I first saw her, most precious to her forlorn father, who seemed to have fixed all the hopes and love of his life on this one remaining little blossom of that life's faded flowers.

"I often had long chats with big Ben, when we met in the wood, and his honest blue eyes would glisten, and the sadness go out of his face when he talked of his one darling — his little maid, as he called her. He was never tired of telling of her womanly little ways and speeches; then how she swept, and sewed, and sang for him; how she had her mother's sweet, patient manners, and often reminded him of her waiting in heaven!

"'Ah, sir,' he said to me one day, 'I do pray God every night to spare me my little maid. I'm oft afraid she's too good for the like o' me. When I get grieved and low, o' nights, sometimes, thinking o' them that's gone, she do sing about the goodness o' the Lord, hymns and such like she have learnt at the school, till I'm afraid she'll take wings like that lark up yonder, sir, as is going up and up, forgetting all about the evil and pecking as is down in the world below it sir. She sings that sweet it melts my grief away. Part joy, part grief, sir.'

"What he said about her singing was true of him too. Every Sunday she came hand in hand with her father to the tiny church, and I could hear their voices, clear and fresh above all others, rising

up to His honor and glory, as though He had never sent them a trouble or a trial. Then they would trudge off together lovingly, hand in hand, through the long lanes, with a smiling bob and bow for many folks they met; she smart in an old red cloth cloak, rapidly getting too small for her growing self; he in well-brushed velveteens, and a posy in his button-hole. As long as her loving fingers could detect a flower in any nook, it was cherished for 'fa' on Sunday; for was he not all the world to her, his one daughter, his pride, 'his little maid?'

"One Saturday it happened that I had some books sent from London, and turning them over, I came to a small one, on the cover of which was the picture of a girl in a red cloak. 'Not unlike little Brant!'

I thought; so I put it in my pocket, intending to give it to her when she came to church next morning. Then I strolled out for a walk. It was just such a day as this, Beatie, fresh and sweet, and I wandered on from meadow to lane, now stopping to admire the beauties about me, now trying to decide which should be my Easter Sunday text, when suddenly something red caught my eye, and I saw it was a cloak lying on a chair, which chair was standing in the porch of Log Lodge, as the people called it. I had come over three miles, so I stopped to breathe, and think how pretty and peaceful it all looked. Only a little noisy bulfinch sang and twittered in the window, over its nest all smothered in honeysuckle, and a happy cat and kittens lay purring on the grass-plat.

"Suddenly I remembered the book in my pocket. I was in a good mind to go in and give it to Nellie Mary in exchange for a few of those smiles which I knew it would conjure up. As I paused undecided, I heard a light joyous laugh, which the bird stopped its note to listen to. Then — oh, then! — I heard a far different sound ring through the air — the sudden report of a gun, followed by a shriek, a cry, and a fall.

"For a moment I thought it must be some hunter near; but then the lodge door was broken open from within, and a man in his shirt-sleeves came rushing frantically along the path, so pale, so haggard, and so wild, I scarcely knew him for big brown Ben, the keeper.

"I caught him in my arms, exclaiming.

'What — who has done this, Ben?' for I thought he was wounded.

"'I ha' done it: I ha' done it!' he cried, struggling in my hold like a madman; 'I ha' killed her, I say. Let me go!'

"'Done what? done what, man?' and I forced him to stand still.

"'I ha' killed her — my Nell! I ha' seen her dead, I tell thee! My last darling is dead; 'I ha' killed her! Let me die too!'

"Then, as I let go my hold, he cast himself on the turf, and lay, face downwards, like a dead man.

"I ran hurriedly into the lodge. There was a gun on the floor; and on the black hearth-rug lay little Nelly Mary, while scattered about her were a lot of wild

flowers, which she had evidently been tying up as she fell. My own heart almost stopped as I stooped down to feel hers. Thank God! it was beating yet, though she was senseless. Then I saw it was her arm that had been injured. The old story — a gun left loaded, and carelessly handled. Oh dear, how many lives this one mistake has cost!

"I dared not move her, but I put some water to her pale lips and face; and presently the blue eyes opened, looked wonderingly round, and fixed themselves on the gun, lying near.

"'Where's fa'!' she whispered, chokingly.

"'He's here, darling — he's here, little Nell. Keep quiet, your father wishes it, dear!'

"Ah!' she sighed softly, 'I'm glad it did not hurt poor fa' instead of me.' Then she lay quite still again, a picture of patience.

"A deep groan made me look up with a start. 'Is my little maid dead?' asked a hoarse voice. Ben had risen, and come to the door. His eyes were quite dry, and bright and shiny.

"'Ben,' I said, 'with God's help, your child will recover, but we must have a doctor at once; you must go to the village as fast as you can.'

"'I canna go, sir! I canna leave her. Do you go, sir. I pray you, let me stay by her. Maybe she's dying, my little maid, and I killed her,' he wailed.

"'Nonsense, Ben! go at once. You are fresher and quicker than I. I will

watch her. She is safe for the present, I tell you, man! Go — run, for her life! If you love her and wish to save her, go!'

"He flung himself down over the rug, careful in his sorrow not to hurt her, and kissed her still face in tearless agony. Then he tore off like a hunted hare, down the green lanes and across the meadows; it was a race for a life, dearer far than his own.

CHAPTER II.

I STAYED alone by that little figure, doing all I could for her, which was not much; but I bound up the hurt arm, gave her water, and waited. Every now and then she roused a little, and asked for 'fa'—dear fa'—poor fa."

"I think she was bewildered whether the same shot had touched them both; but she never once complained of her own hurt and pain: he was her only trouble, and the not seeing him fretted her woefully. I could not persuade her he was safe. At last—how long it seemed to

me, yet how short a time it really was! — there came a sound of wheels, nearer and nearer, then good fat Dr. Robbins came hurrying in, his face full of tender compassion.

"'Well, well, my little girl—— Why, here's a pretty to-do,' he said, softly, bending over her. Then, as he saw her looking uneasily behind him, he beckoned to her father, who came forward, still white and tearless and desperate. 'Come, father, we want you to help us a little. Don't let her see you quake, man!' he whispered. 'You can do more than I can to soothe her.' But she had fainted again.

"Between them they lifted the thick rug and its senseless occupant, and carried it on to the little bed; then I took Ben's hand, and led him outside. He stood

quite still where I placed him — still as if he had been stone. The little bullfinch sang louder and more merrily than ever; I could have choked it just then. I should have tried to comfort the poor man, but I was too excited and troubled. Oh, how long the doctor seemed! Would he tell us the child must die? Poor, poor Ben! At this moment out waddled the doctor. He shut the door very quietly behind him, then he turned to the stony figure by his side, and gave him a great hearty slap on the back, crying, in his kind voice, 'Cheer up, Ben Briant! there's no fear; it's a bad flesh-wound, but it will heal, with care. Come, look up, man! Your little maid's the right sort to mend. She's patience itself, and will be well in a month, if you keep her quiet. And no

fretting, mind! Your business is to cheer her up!'

"Shall I ever forget the 'Thank God I haven't killed her!' which burst from that poor father, as he let himself drop straight down on his knees and, laying his face on the old red cloak, wept and sobbed out his thankfulness, forgetting we were there.

"The doctor, opening the door, drew me into the room gently. 'Poor chap! let him have it out, for, bless me! he has something to be thankful for. If the shot had lodged anywhere else she'd have been gone straight off. Ah, well! — What's that you're saying, my dear? We can't have any talking yet! Yes, your fa' is coming — never fear. I'll fetch him in now. Come, father, to little Nell.'

"When I looked in an hour or two afterwards, with the nurse I had brought to help Ben, I found him sitting by her bedside, with her uninjured hand in his. She had had a little sleep, and was better now, she said. And how pretty and patient she looked, with her golden hair lying on her pillow like a crown! I thought she did not see me, but she did, in an instant, and drew her hand out of Ben's for a moment — only for a moment — to put it into mine.

"'I am so glad ——'

"'My dear, you must not speak,' I said, hurriedly.

"'No, sir, I won't any more; but I am so glad it was me that was hurt, instead of fa'!'

"'Oh Nelly, darling!' he said, softly,

for he was trying not to excite himself, for her sake, 'I could have borne ten times as much, to save you pain.'

"I held up a warning finger, for she was flushing as she answered, 'But I am only a little girl, of no use, and you are fa,' that does so much for me. I can better keep still than you, and the ache will leave off if I try to be good, won't it?"

"And did she get quite well?" asked Beatie, with a great lump in her throat.

"She did, dear. You see, she was gentle and quiet, trying to bear patiently what she saw was so great a trial to her father, she never complained, she never spoke of herself, and only loved him the more for the accident, showing that even a child can be strong to bear, if there is a

good will to help, and unselfish love for others.

A few weeks after Uncle Richard had gone Beatrice had a fall over a step — a little thing, it seemed, but it sprained her ankle very severely; it was bathed in warm water, and rubbed and bathed again. She must lie still on the sofa, was the doctor's verdict, or it would be a serious matter.

"Still on the sofa!" Does any one of you realize what that means for a lively healthy girl like Beatie? "Oh dear, I shall have a dreadful time of it, she is so self-willed!" groaned mamma, ever kind, but with many household cares.

"Miss Beatrice keep still! She'll keep us all in a turmoil!" groaned the servants.

"She'll be laid up all the winter, such a

little uncontrollable quicksilver as she is!' said Aunt Sarah, who had nursed Beatrice before.

But somehow Uncle Richard's words had touched Beatie's heart. "Even a child can be strong, if there is good will to help strength." She *would* be strong, so she submitted to all the rubbings, and lay quietly on the sofa, only now and then getting impatient at her imprisonment, then determining to bear it with a good will, and be strong. Seeing her so gentle and patient, every one did their best to help and cheer the little invalid. Books, prints, pets of all sorts came, and smiling friends, glad to see she was not crying and complaining, as they expected. Every one tries to help those who try to help themselves, and Beatrice did try.

"Well, I never saw so bad a twist so soon mended!" said the doctor, about a fortnight after. "I wish all my patients had Miss Elliot's patience, they would get over their troubles a good deal quicker, and it would be much pleasanter work attending to them, I am sure."

"I don't understand it, doctor; but I am most thankful Beatie has been a help, instead of a trouble, on the sofa; and oh, what a help a child can be if she tries! No one knows how much the mother of a family has to think about, and how sorry and troubled she is when any of the children are ailing!" Then, as Beatrice came slightly limping into the room, Mamma went forward to meet her, and leading her to her own easy-chair, said, with a kiss, "I was just saying to Doctor Hall that I

wondered what it was that had so altered my little girl. Where did she learn to be considerate and patient? You are my little comfort now, instead of my little troublesome one. What has changed you, darling?"

"Only a story Uncle Richard told me, mamma."

JENNY AND HER JOHNNY.

ONE bright sunny Sunday afternoon, when the very birds in the trees seemed too thoughtful even to sing loudly, but chirped their gladness in low, subdued hymns of thankfulness for the happy summer weather, Uncle Richard, having stolen a few days from his town duties, is strolling, book in hand, up and down the garden-walk at the back of that dear old country house he loves. He is thinking how beautiful everything is — how sweet the flowers, how blue the sky, how solemn the hush that even in far-off country places is somehow only

noticed on Sundays. He rambles on, until he finds himself crossing the vegetable garden, and approaching the low ivy-covered nursery window, where a whole colony of busy swallows are twittering peacefully at home — that is, the outside — but from within the room different sounds are heard — sad sounds to listen to on this sweet Sunday afternoon.

"You're a horrid, bad, wicked boy; and I've a mind to give you a hard slap, I have!" cries a girl's voice, raised shrill and high with passion.

"I'm so, so solly, Beatie!" sobs a very subdued, childish tone. "So velly solly I did it."

"'Sorry!' what's the use of that? You've been and torn all the binding off my new geography prize, and poked

it in the fire — you know you have, you little monkey! I hate you!"

Then comes a sudden shriek; the slap has evidently been given. The culprit resents with kicks, and cries for "Mamma, mamma!" and the nursery window is flung open with such a sudden bang that several young swallows chirp with alarm, and Uncle Richard draws back unobserved, while a little girl comes fluttering out, and runs past him, wringing her hands with rage.

Can this be his pretty Beatrice? — her golden hair all dishevelled, her face crimson, her blue eyes flashing! Can this be gentle Beatrice, who, when her frock is caught by a pitying white rose, turns to break it from its stem, and throws it, bruised and crushed, into the

bushes? O Passion, what an ugly master thou art!

On and on that ugly master carries her, till he flings her on to a great mound of new-cut grass, all scented with dying buttercups, clover, and pink daisies, fragrant to the last. She lays her throbbing head on the soft pillow, and cries, almost breathlessly, "Tiresome child! I detest him, I do!"

A brown-eyed bird perches on a stone opposite her, and seems to repeat her words in a loud wondering note, "Detest, detest, detest! I detest him, I do — do — How sad, how sad, how sad!"

"Oh, go away, do, worry! you make my head ache!"

She clutches a handful of turf, to throw at him, but still he sits and sings, or, as

it seems to her, repeats her own words, "I detest, dete – e – st him!"

When folks sit silently listening to a bird, Passion gets tired of their company. So it is with Beatrice, who lets the turf drop, and begins to relent.

"Well, of course I don't mean that," she thinks; "I mean it was a shame of Freddie — naughty boy. I wish I hadn't slapped him so hard, after all," she adds, as Passion disappears from the scene; "poor little fellow! he said he was sorry." And a vision of the tear-stained rosy face troubles her conscience. Then she remembers some words his mother used before going to church that morning — "Be kind to Freddie, Beatrice, when I am away; be his little mother; he is almost a baby, remember, dear, and you are a big girl."

"Almost a baby!" and she had slapped him and shaken him, even while he cried, "Beatrice, I am so solly!" Should she go back and comfort him? No; she is not equal to that, when she thinks of her spoiled "geography," and so she stifles the better feeling that whispers forgiveness. For a good half hour she lies on the scented grass; the soft pitying sunshine dries her tears, and the little wild flowers look up, and wonder how she can still look so sober, with them around her.

"Beatie, Beatie! where are you, my girl?" cries a cheerful voice near.

Poor Beatie! she must face her uncle. Hot and flushed, she jumps up, wondering if he will see and wonder at her appearance. But, no; he takes no notice. Only

more kindly than usual, if possible, he calls her to look at a rare humming-bird moth that is darting in and out of all the sweetest flowers. Then they get to talking about bees and butterflies, and the thousand and one country sights that please townsfolk so much. She feels good and happy again — almost.

Presently they find themselves under the old walnut-tree in the far meadow, and Uncle Richard proposes that they should rest a while on the soft clover, and have a little quiet talk.

"Uncle," says Beatrice, as she snuggles down by his side, "do you remember the pretty story you told me here, about Nelly Mary? — you know. Will you tell me another like it? please do."

"Tell me, first, what did you learn

from that one, Beatie?" he asked, softly stroking her hair.

"I learnt to try to be unselfish and patient. I thought I had, at least; but, oh dear! its so hard, so very hard, to be good, sometimes."

She is thinking how angry she was but just now, and feeling that her uncle is looking at her with serious, sad eyes, and knows all about it.

"And you want another story to help you. Well, I will tell you one, Beatie."

"A true one!" she cries, eagerly.

"A true one, dear; so listen to the record of the doings of a little country lass — for no dainty lady was my Jenny; no golden-haired missy, like you, Beat, with hosts of toys and books, and fine silk sashes. No! my Jenny had nothing

when she was twelve years old, but her Johnny, and very dear and precious was he to her unselfish heart.

"At the time I am speaking of, Jenny and her Johnny — thus they were always spoken of — were living in a poor little hut on the outskirts of a forest. Their father had been killed by a falling wall; and worn out with sorrow and fretting, their poor gentle hard-working mother felt herself growing weaker every day. She grew thinner and whiter, and more anxious, as she looked at her two children, and tried to trust them without a murmur to that God who has promised that He would be a father to the fatherless.

"Jenny was a slight, thoughtful girl, tall and brown-eyed; and little three-year old Johnny was fat, rosy, and masterful.

No wonder the mother wondered what would become of them when she was gone, for they had no relations, and few friends. Yet she had a true and trusting heart, this poor dying widow, working so hard at her embroidery to the last, while Jenny, all unconscious of the coming shadow: bustled about the two tiny rooms cooking, cleaning, mending, in a manner perfectly surprising in a girl of her age. She knew her mother was ailing, and that her strong young arms could help her, so she did all the hard work without a murmur, while the mother sat stitching.

"But the day came when that mother's hand dropped wearily; when the needle would no longer trace the dainty outline of roses and lilies; then she took Johnny

in her arms, and called Jenny, still holding her boy tenderly to her heart.

"'My Jenny,' she said, 'I am going to give you a sacred trust. I am going to ask you to be a little mother to our Johnny. Will you promise, that I may turn to God in peace and ask Him to watch over you both, my poor forlorn lambs?"

"It was a sad, sad awaking for poor Jenny, who loved her patient mother dearly; so dearly that she tried to bear the blow as quietly as possible. Presently, when the poor girl was able to stay the bitter sudden tears that would make her feel sick and faint with the great trouble to come, the mother placed Johnny in her arms, and drew both their young heads to her sorrowful patient

heart, blessing and caressing them both, while she said falteringly, 'Jenny, my daughter, promise me now this one thing and we will speak no more of the cloud which the Lord sees fit to shadow your young lives with. Promise that you will take what care you can of your little brother. That you will try to teach him to be good; that some day I may hold you both again, mine for ever and ever."

"'Mother, I promise I will be very good to him,' sobbed the girl through her tears.

"'And you, Johnny darling, try and be good when poor mother is gone, and love Jenny.'

"But Johnny, who had been staring with wide open blue eyes, quite speechless at the sight of Jenny's tears, burst out with a sudden roar 'that mother should

not go; she should not leave him; he would have no other mother; that he loved her; that he would fight any one who tried to take her away;' and he clenched his dimpled fists, and shook them at Jenny, as though she were the aggressor.

"But before the autumn leaves had fallen, his mother did go; and Jenny and Johnny were alone — alone in that dreary little cottage. And Jenny sat weeping, with her hand hidden in the scanty black skirt, while the boy played at her feet.

"But as she sat sobbing there, thinking only of her own forlorn state, he gradually left off his game, came with scared looks, and, laying his tangled curly locks on her lap, declared that she should be his mother as long as she liked, if she only would leave off crying, and take him just a bit.

"Then Jenny threw aside the black skirt, and, kissing the tearful rosy face, renewed the promise she had made to her dead mother. She would do her best for Johnny's sake; and she sat there rocking him until the little fellow fell asleep in her arms.

"Then she laid him in his bed; and shaking off the feeling that made her sit there, uncaring, with her face hidden, she bathed her swollen eyes, brushed her hair, and got the place in order, even fetching out the embroidery frame which her mother had used so long, and which she had put out of sight in her first despair.

"And the next day, when she found a little lost lamb bleating so pitifully at her door, she took it up and carried it in her

arms till she found its fond anxious mother; 'So,' she thought, 'will I care for Johnny. Some day I will give him to our mother, who will rejoice as this one does, only a good deal more, because it will be heaven there.'

CHAPTER II.

FROM that day Jenny sat aside all thought of herself. Her whole heart was set upon keeping her promise, and bravely and nobly she did it; early and late she toiled; she went from house to house earning a few pence here and there — never begging, mind; never taking anything she had not earned; but never thinking any work too hard that brought in money. Her mother had been very skillful at her needle, and the girl took after her; at spare times, or when Johnny was asleep, she practised at the embroidery frame, but coarser work did

not make her fingers very fit for such delicate materials, nor did she very well know how to dispose of the few articles she had managed to embroider to her satisfaction. The people at the big house were away, and no one else wanted such things. Still she scrambled along somehow till Johnny's fourth birthday; the day when I first saw her and heard her simple story.

"I happened to be delayed in the village for a day or two, and, taking a very early morning stroll, saw a young girl standing at an old-fashioned doorway feeding chicks. It was such a sweet, bright smiling face, that I could not resist smiling back at it.

"'What an early breakfast you are giving your noisy family, little maid!' I said.

"'It's my Johnny's birthday, and I want to get done early, sir,' she answered, quite as though everybody knew her Johnny.

"Later on there was a great stir among the villagers. Jenny's Johnny was missing from the cottage, and Jenny was as one out of her mind.

"Jenny, it seemed, had one little article which she treasured next to Johnny — it was a lovely lawn handkerchief, all gaily embroidered with red roses, the work of her loved mother when a girl. It had always been most carefully preserved; and every now and then Jenny took it out of the little drawer filled with lavender, and admired and cried over it. Of course, wearing it was out of the question; it was far too precious for that. She had even

refused a golden half sovereign offered for it by the peddler who had come that way to the fair.

"Of late she had been too busy to look at her treasure, for people were getting used to employ the clever willing girl; and poor as they were, many a shilling came in Jenny's way to help her keep her promise and her Johnny.

"Well, it happened very unfortunately, that the said Johnny, being left, as he often was, to amuse himself as best he could, took it into his head to get on the top of the table and pull open the small drawer, by the fireside, where lay the precious handkerchief all by itself.

"'Mammy's pretty wed woses; how nice you 'mell!" cooed the boy, holding the handle, and bending over the drawer.

"Somehow he missed his footing, and came down, drawer, 'woses,' and all; only he came down on his head, and screamed as four-year-old boys can, and the poor 'woses' fluttered out of his hand on to the fender. Luckily there was no fire.

"Old Bridget, from her cottage, came to see the cause of the screaming, and found my lord with a great bruise on his forehead, and the empty drawer clutched in his fat hand. As she opened the door something red-and-white fluttered on to the bars, then up the broad open chimney, then away — who knows where but the wind-angels?

"Oh, how poor Jenny cried when she found her precious little handkerchief gone! What a grief and a trouble it

was to her; yet she never said a harsh word to the child that had set her heart aching, but tenderly bathed the great bump on his forehead, sobbing, while he looked at her with wondering troubled eyes. He knew it was all grief for that handkerchief that was lost.

"'Don't cwy, likle mother! Other mother's woses flewd away — back to other mother who did 'em. P'raps she'll send 'em to Jenny again, p'raps.'

"'Mother is in heaven; it's too far, dear.'

"'Is it furder than the middle of the forest?" asked Johnny. 'Couldn't I ask her to give 'em you again? She made 'em first.'

"'Oh hush, Johnny! I wish you could. But it's no use talking; bed time

now, dear, and you must go to bed, because sister has to get out early and earn some breakfast for Johnny.'

"As she laid the sturdy child down, she kissed her boy as tenderly as ever, for she remembered he was almost a baby, and she a big girl, as you know, Beatrice." Beatrice thought of that other boy, almost a baby, that she had been so harsh to, and blushed.

"Well, the next day, as I told you, Johnny was lost. Jenny had gone out to help do some washing, and Bridget had left the child happily feeding a brood of tiny chicks round about the cottage door. She had thought no more about him, till the unusual silence struck her.

"'Johnny!' for an hour or two she called all about the place, but no Johnny

answered her, and too soon she found that Johnny had vanished — but where? The few and far neighbors had not seen him, and Bridget wrung her old hands when she thought of the river, and the possibility of his having strayed so far alone. Those little red legs were firm and strong.

"Ill news, they say, fly apace, and certainly it was not long before the knowledge of her brother's disappearance reached Jenny, who went flying, white-faced, seeking and calling for the child, but no answer came. Kind men, who had gone round about the place, returned one by one without the slightest clue. The daylight passed away, and darkened into night, and then midnight: still no token or sign of the lost boy of poor half-frantic Jenny.

"'We can look nowhere else to-night, my poor child!' said my friend, who had been eager in the chase; 'we have gone every way—far beyond any distance he could have wandered. Try and take patience till morning dawns; we will surely find him then; he cannot have disappeared altogether, you know.'

"Jenny listened with dry, tearless eyes, and answered huskily, 'But I *must* find him; I promised mother to take care of him. What will she think! what will she think!'

"'My dear,' I said, 'try and have patience. Your mother knows, perhaps, how faithfully you have tried to keep your promise. As soon as it is light we will scour the country round, and bring you your boy. We can do no more to-night.'

"But she only wrung her hands, and darted from the crowd, to resume her fruitless search, for in the darkness we could every now and then hear that pitiful cry — 'Johnny, Johnny, where are you, dear?' But still no answer came to bless her.

"I do not think many people in the village slept that night; I did not for one. That dark flowing river had been in my thoughts as it had been in others' — luckily it never entered those of Jenny; but every time I dozed I woke up with a frightened start. So, when the first pale light showed itself I rose, and dressed, and, going gently down stairs, passed into the garden and the lane beyond.

"It was a soft gray spring morning,

and only one cock made itself heard. All seemed so hushed and still that I felt quite depressed as I went round the back of the cottages towards the one where the lost child had so lately nestled.

"It looked very solitary standing there alone; the flowers drooped, the windows were some of them open, and, looking in at the little parlor, I saw a slim girl's figure kneeling by the side of an empty crib. She was in her hat and shawl, just as she had left her washing yesterday: she had evidently fallen asleep praying for her Johnny's safety. Retreating as softly as possible, I was quite startled by a sudden gruff squeak, and nip at my legs; looking round to see what this meant, I found I had disturbed the repose of a solemn old one-eyed jackdaw, that

appeared to have been sleeping in the remains of a chip basket. I cannot tell why, at a time when my mind was filled with far other things, I should have stooped down to talk, to look in at the retreat of this wise old bird — perhaps it was because I felt myself so useless as yet. However, stoop down I did, and peering into the basket saw there was a child's hat lying at the back of it filled with rubbish. Well, after all, it might be any child's hat, but this had a green ribbon, so had lost Johnny's; and it was clean, so was Johnny's; how came it there? and the old jackdaw looked up at me with evil eyes, as much as to say, 'Ah, you would like to know, but you won't!' and went hopping off in great dudgeon. I felt quite angry with that

bird; where had he got that hat from? After all, was the child anywhere near? and did the jackdaw know it?

"Very soon the neighbors roused. I showed the hat. Mother Bridget declared it to be the one the missing child had worn but yesterday. Where, then, had Jack found it? While they searched every nook and corner he was known to haunt, I followed the old bird for more than two hours; and what a dance he led me! I dropped things for him to hide, but he only put them into impossible places, and then screamed and hopped with delight. Still he kept near about the cottage, and never went beyond the great straw-rick in the meadow beyond.

"Of course we had looked round this rick, but all was clear there. Yet Jack

kept his one eye so innocently turned away from it that I could not help being suspicious, and came back several times to prod at it; Jack following, and screaming angrily.

"'Taint no use, master,' said an old laborer, sorrowfully; 't' river's the next thing to look into; the child aint a mouse that he could squeeze into this here stack.'

"'He couldn't have got to the top, could he?' I asked, doubtfully; it seemed such a foolish question to ask the man.

"'He couldn't unless he had wings, like this here magpie, as seems to know we ha' lost summat.' answered old Saunders, rather sneeringly.

"'I tell you what, I'll go up and see,' I said, all at once, more out of contradiction than anything else.

"Will 'ee, sir? I make bold to ask how? we aint got no wings to lend you, sir.'

"'Well, perhaps you've got a ladder instead, Master Clever.'

"'There's only one as would reach in all the place, and that belongs to Joe Brush the miller, as squints.'

"'Well, go and ask Joe Brush to bring it here.'

"'Joe went to Talford yesterday, an' he keeps it locked up when he's away, leastways, so I've heard.'

"I sent off to inquire after Joe's ladder; the searchers gradually got together; and my friend, heading them, came towards where I stood, and said, 'We are going down to the river, now, Richard. What are you doing here? won't

you come with us? are you waiting for anything?'

"'Waiting for Joe Brush's ladder,' I answered.

"'Well, perhaps you are right. Why, my poor Jenny, is it you? You must go home with Bridget here. You look ready to drop, child.

"It was indeed Jenny, so pale and wan, holding that little straw hat, pressed on her arms. But she was not crying, only looking anxiously, first at one face, then at another.

"'Oh, please don't give up looking for Johnny!' she cried, clasping her hands; 'he can't be lost — can he? Johnny, Johnny! where are you?' she almost screamed in her despair.

"Then from high above our heads,

came a sweet, childish voice, muffled and far-off, 'I am here, Jennie! I am here!'

"Whiter, whiter grew the little sister, who, all unprepared, thought it was a voice from the skies; as to us, a loud and joyous shout answered the call. And, how it happened I cannot tell you, but before Joe Brush's ladder had arrived, one man had scrambled on another man's back, and another on to his, and, almost at the risk of a broken neck, had reached the top of the great straw heap, into which, somewhat to our surprise, he disappeared, head-foremost, it seemed to us.

"'All right, I've got 'un!' came his call.

"'Where are you both?' we shouted.

"'In a hole! little 'un safe and sound, but we can't get out till the ladder comes.'

"What a rush there was to hurry on that ladder! and, oh! what a cheer when Johnny, with his yellow hair all on end, and his blue eyes very open and round, was handed out of his hiding-place, and passed from arm to arm, till he rested in those of Jenny, hitherto so tearless, now sobbing as though her heart would break with very joy.

"'Don't cry, Jenny!' with his fat arms round her neck; 'don't cry! I am so hungry; and see, I have got back mother's woses.'

"And sure enough, rolled up in a damp dirty lump, was a something pink and white and torn.

"I need not tell you that the children had not far to go for a breakfast that morning, or indeed any other morning.

I took care of that, at any rate. For a trifle old Bridget looked after them until Johnny was old enough to go to a good school, and Jenny found time to practice her embroidery, which in a short time she did so well that she had no lack of customers among our many acquaintances. She was always unselfish and devoted — a real 'other mother' to the lad, as he grew up honest and true, under her careful charge."

"But, uncle, how did he get up into such a place? and where did he find 'mother's woses'?"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you that important part of my story, which we could not quite make out at the time. We found that Joe Brush had left his ladder against the straw heap for a short time

on the day Johnny was lost. Joe remembered seeing the magpie hopping about the ladder-foot, with some red rag, as he thought, and a boy running after him. We could suppose the child, seeing the bird hopping off with the very handkerchief his sister had cried about, followed and scrambled up the ladder after the thief. Once on the top, he had tumbled into a very soft resting-place, fortunately unharmed, and after crying a bit, had burrowed into the straw, and had fallen asleep — his hiding-place solely visible to the stars — and was awakened only by that loud-appealing call of 'Johnny, where are you?' It was fortunate we were near enough to hear his answer, or he might have spent an unpleasant time while we had been looking every-

where but the right place for the poor little man.

"And now, Beatie, my story is finished. Has it taught you anything? Will you tell me, or leave me to judge by the result?"

Beatie bends her head over the clover, and smiles, with tears in her eyes.

"Why, I declare, there is Freddy at the window! I must go and say 'Good-morning' to the little fellow."

Uncle Richard rises, and walks across the lawn, and away to where the little fellow is rubbing his nose in a rather woebegone state on the glass. But he stops at sight of his uncle.

"What's the matter, old man?" calls out the uncle, from below; "what are you doing there?"

"Ma's out, and I all 'lone, and Beatie don't love me, an' its all mis'able!" says the boy, with a quiver in his voice and lip.

Just then the door behind him opens, and Beatie steals in, and, catching up the little fellow in her arms, gives him such a tender loving kiss that he looks amazed and half-frightened.

"I'm so sorry that I slapped you, Freddy! I was very cross, I know; but I'll try and be kind another time, see if I don't."

"Big sister, well, I won't never no more tear your graffelly's books," protests Freddy, earnestly, as he claps his hands joyfully.

I don't know if Freddy will keep his promise—"he is almost a baby;" but I

do know that Beatrice tries very hard to keep hers." So you see, Uncle Richard's second story was not thrown away.

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